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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-first session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003

(*Item 4 (a)*)

Section 23. Protection of and assistance to refugees

1. At its 27th and 28th meetings, on 28 June 2001, the Committee considered section 23, Protection of and assistance to refugees, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the budget section and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the budget section.

Discussion

3. Support was expressed for the activities undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in particular in relieving the impact of refugee influxes on host developing countries.

4. Satisfaction was expressed with efforts to highlight the particular needs of women and children and to enhance the emergency response capacity of UNHCR, as reflected in the programme of work. It was felt that greater attention should be given to legal and physical protection and that an increase in the number of protection officers was necessary. Emphasis was given to the need for permanent solutions to the problems of refugees by strengthening and intensifying measures for repatriation

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and resettlement. The view was also expressed that, while recognizing the importance of repatriation and resettlement, mention should also be given to other durable solutions, including local integration.

5. With regard to operational cooperation, the view was expressed that memoranda of understanding between UNHCR and other United Nations organizations should be subject to intergovernmental review in order to ensure the credibility of such standby arrangements.

6. The view was expressed that some of the external factors listed in the budget document were within the responsibility of UNHCR management and were therefore largely internal rather than external in nature. In particular, it was pointed out that external factor 23.11 (a), on the training of UNHCR staff, should not be considered as an external factor. With regard to external factor 23.14 (c), the view was also expressed that the level of extrabudgetary funding available to UNHCR was not an external factor of the programme.

7. Appreciation was expressed for the High Commissioner's initiative in distinguishing between core and non-core activities of the Office; it was regretted however, that the initiative had resulted from a shortfall in resources.

8. Emphasis was placed on the need to have contingency plans, worked out in consultation with the Government concerned, to address internal displacement.

9. Concern was expressed about the proposed closure of some UNHCR offices and the negative effect that this could have on the situation of refugees who were under the oversight of those offices.

10. The view was expressed that the new arrangements for the grant contribution from the regular budget seemed appropriate and sensible. However, it was also noted that the increase of US$ 2 million in the regular budget contribution seemed unjustified given the overall budget cuts of the programme. Emphasis was placed on maintaining the real resource value of the grant over time and on preserving the ability of the High Commissioner to implement the programme.

Conclusions and recommendations

11. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of section 23, Protection of and assistance to refugees, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, subject to the following modifications:

Paragraph 23.2

After the first sentence, insert the following sentence, based on the last sentence of paragraph 21.1 of the medium-term plan for 2002-2005: "The pursuit of permanent solutions to the problems of refugees is the heart of protection and the principal purpose of this section."

Paragraph 23.3

Under item (e), replace the phrase "in these activities, due consideration will be given to the interests both of Member States and of the United Nations" with the following text from the end of paragraph 21.5 (f) of the medium-term plan for 2002-2005: "in this regard, due consideration should be given to the

obligation of United Nations officials, in the conduct of their duties, to observe fully both the laws and regulations of Member States and their duties and responsibilities to the Organization."

Table 23.4

At the end of indicator of achievement (e), add the following phrase, based on paragraph 21.17 (d) of the medium-term plan: "; the number of refugees repatriated and resettled."

Paragraph 23.11

Delete the words "(a) UNHCR staff are trained as to the need for, and most effective design of, programme initiatives;" and re-letter the remaining sub-items accordingly.

Paragraph 23.14

Sub-item (c) should read: "(c) a sufficient level of extrabudgetary funding is raised to allow for funding of planned capacity-building projects."